DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 214 PS 019 987

AUTHOR Weiss, Heather B.
TITLE From Grass Roots Programs to State Policy: Strategic Planning and Choices for Family Support and Education Initiatives. Draft.
INSTITUTION Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass. Graduate School of Education.
PUB DATE Apr 89
NOTE 54p.; Paper presented at the Public Policy and Family Support and Education Programs Colloquium (Annapolis, MD, April 26-28, 1989).
PUB TYPE Guides - General (050) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; Community Programs; Educational Policy; Family Problems; *Family Programs; *Policy Formation; *Program Development; Program Evaluation; *Program Implementation; *Public Policy; State Agencies; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Family Policy; *Policy Makers

ABSTRACT

This paper draws on the experience of various states in its discussion of questions, issues, and decisions that policymakers face as they plan their states' family support initiatives. The discussion is organized into three parts that correspond roughly with the stages of policy formation, program development, and program implementation and growth. When formulating policy, policy entrepreneurs must crystallize interest in their program, insert the initiative into the policy agenda of the state, and anticipate opposition. Program development involves: (1) determination of the scale of the initiative; (2) determination of the balance between standardization and flexibility; (3) specification of the program's services; (4) specification of the providers and recipients of the services; (5) coordination of the program with other local programs; (6) specification of the program staff and community involvement; and (7) provision for mechanisms for evaluation. Program implementation is aided when the state staff tries to model the kinds of partnership and empowering relationships with local programs that they hope the local programs will establish with families. The momentum of development must be maintained and balanced with the problems of rapid growth. Several other issues important to policymakers, such as family privacy, are discussed. A list of 18 references is provided. (BC)

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FROM GRASS ROOTS PROGRAMS TO STATE POLICY: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CHOICES FOR FAMILY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Heather B. Weiss

Harvard Family Research Project
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Paper prepared for
The Public Policy
and Family Support
and Education
Programs Colloquium
Annapolis, MD
April 26-28, 1989

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Introduction

Family support and education policies and programs appear more and more frequently as a preferred solution to a wide range of contemporary social problems. In more and more states -- governors, legislators, advocacy groups, public agencies, and citizen groups -- have bought the logic of prevention and family-oriented early intervention. As a result, they have or are considering the initiation of family support and education programs. This new and escalating interest in state financing and provision of family-oriented prevention programs may mark a substantial change in the relationship between families and the state. At a minimum, it indicates a new willingness to get involved in family issues and that politicians and policy makers, rather than avoiding family issues, are now actively pursuing them.

This paper will draw on the experience of some of the states that have been pioneers in this area in order to lay out some of the questions, issues and decisions which new pioneers will face in planning their state's initiatives. In these pioneering states, a group of policy entrepreneurs saw the promise of these programs to achieve important goals in public eduction, social service, health or child welfare. They have had the less-than-straightforward job of developing diverse program ideas and strategies that had previously been operationalized in small grass-roots community programs or in research and demonstration programs, and of determining how to "scale them up" in order to create a large state-sponsored system of strong, effective and community-

responsive programs. In the process, these early pioneers have had to avoid some significant dangers as they translated these program ideas into large public systems. These dangers included too rapid proliferation of poorly-developed programs that were: oversold, under-funded, poorly matched to population needs and characteristics, rigidly bureaucratic, and that lost both community input and ownership as well as the capacity to implement creative ways of working with parents.

We extrapolate from their experiences here, while at the same time noting that new states face some different challenges because today's policy climate is unlike that in which these other states began their initiatives. Unlike today, the early initiatives began in a public policy climate of relatively little state-level interest in broadening the state's mandate to sponsor preventive, community-based programs that would deliver new services in new types of partnerships with families. These early pioneers had to fan a small spark to light a tiny fire of interest in these programs within a single state agency. In several states, the initial spark has grown and there are stable and growing pilot programs (Maryland, Connecticut, and Kentucky) or fully-legislated and institutionalized state programs (Minnesota and Missouri). Now, because of the widespread current interest in these programs, new pioneers have a different and especially difficult task. It is to manage a much larger fire of interest within a state and to prevent a situation where several state agencies mount similar programs aimed

at similar or overlapping populations, thereby further fragmenting an already under-coordinated and under-funded set of preventive services for families.

A brief scan of the larger policy environment shows that this is not a totally unimaginable situation. It is at least conceivable, given current federal legislation, and different school, welfare, maternal and child health, and child welfare reform efforts, that similar or at least overlapping family support and education programs would be mounted by different state agencies, and even by different divisions within the same agency, in order to strengthen families and promote child and adult development. Such programs would come through: family literacy[1] (through federal family literacy efforts and Even Start legislation); early childhood education and development[2] (through the state department of education and enhanced child care efforts); maternal and child health[3] (through efforts to prevent infant mortality and morbidity); special education services for early development[4](through lead and partner agency efforts to implement Public Law 94-457, the federal special education legislation covering birth to three); abuse and neglect prevention[5] (through diverse state trust fund resources and federal dollars); prevention in child welfare services[6] (through efforts to promote prevention and establish a continuum of services under child welfare auspices) and through welfare reform[7] (through provisions for parent education for teen parents in the Family Support Act of 1988 and multiple ongoing efforts to assist teen parents with parenting on the road to self-sufficiency).

So the new and broad interest in adding new or adapting existing programs to provide family support and education services poses a major challenge to both existing and new state initiatives -- how, given the scarcity of resources for innovation, can states coordinate or even collaborate within and across agencies to avoid duplication and maximize the resources available for the provision of high quality services for children and families? While most state family support and education initiatives so far have been developed by a single agency, we believe there is a strong likelihood that in the future there may be several potentially competing initiatives within a state, so we will raise questions about ways to foster coordination and collaboration at the state and/or local level at several points in this paper.

The policy entrepreneurs who began past state family support and education programs built the teams and coalitions necessary to get policy makers' attention and developed long-term "the selling document and...road map" (Tableman, 1986) necessary to launch and guide their state's initiative. While each state will have to develop its own plan, one uniquely situated to its policy makers, agency agendas, and to its own needs and resources, the experiences of these pioneers do hold sore generic lessons for yet a new group of pioneers. Therefore, based on our research about their experiences (Harvard Family Research Project, 1989; Weiss, 1989) we describe some of the issues and choices they faced and the ways they addressed them in order to help other states formulate their own strategic plan or road map. If other state's experiences are any

guide, these strategic plans will have to be continuously revised as the new opportunities and problems arise in the course of formulating and implementing the state's initiative.

The paper is organized into three parts that correspond roughly with the stages of policy formulation, program development, and program implementation and growth. The fourth and final section discusses several additional issues which must be considered as states consider mounting and formulating their family support and education initiatives.

I. Getting Family Support and Education Programs on the State Agenda

In many if not all states, there is already a general sense that programs need to be developed that will strengthen families. This general sense has been created by commission reports, the governor's state of the state message, or other documents which argue for the importance of investing in programs that strengthen families as a way to approach a variety of the states' current costly social problems. The task, then, is to crystallize this interest, formulate it into a policy or programmatic initiative, and build a constituency for its development.

In getting the initiative on to the public agenda, it is important from the outset to recognize how family support and education initiatives are distinct from other public services and to make sure that supporters understand the implications of this for the

many subsequent decisions about program development and implementation. Specifically, these family- as opposed to child-oriented prevention programs are underlaid by a set of operating principles described in this Colloquium's overview paper (see also Weiss & Halpern, 1988; and Weissbourd & Kagan, 1989) and by the emphasis that they put on a community base and community partnership with the state in the provision of services for families. These principles differ from the ways many public agencies orient their services and do business with families. In order to implement these programs in accord with these principles, state agencies in turn may have to rethink how they work with families and with local programs and craft new types of partnerships with them.

The Policy Entrepreneurs and the Process of Building Coalitions

Our research suggests that in states where family support and education programs have been successfully inserted on to the public agenda, key individuals who we label policy entrepreneurs, played a critical role. These individuals see their role as developing new programs, not simply administering programs developed outside their jurisdiction. They have tried to turn the new federalism to advantage and create state programs in accord with the state's needs and resources. The particular entrepreneurs differed across the states, but they included some combination of legislators, agency personnel, governors or governors' staff. They have in common the fact that they

firmly believe in the importance of family oriented preventive interventions and the fact that they have made a commitment to developing initiatives over the long haul. As a result, each has taken a long term view and planned accordingly. From the onset, these entrepreneurs built teams, including members from inside and outside their own agency, that they judged were necessary to crystallize interest in these programs and to help in the formulation of specific initiatives.

In this process of crystallization, the entrepreneurs and the groups that they formed to plan the initiatives often went through very basic discussions about the condition of children and families in the state, considered family needs and how existing services were or were not meeting them, and came to a consensus about the basic rationale for provision of family support and education services. These general discussions then gradually focused on more specific goals for the new initiative: for example, was the goal to create new programs, or to reform or extend existing services? Was the initiative to be used as a means to promote linkages across services, or were the services to be more self contained? Discussions then moved to an examination of how these goals fit into the state's legislative, executive, and child and family advocacy agenda, and then how they fit with the goals of particular state agency(ies).

The result of these discussions usually was a set of agreements among the group that certain pressing problems are caused in party by problems with family functioning

and that they therefore require family-oriented interventions to address them. In the past, such problem formulation led to a single agency mounting programs. In the future, new states should give thought to whether or not to formulate the current family-oriented problems in such a way that the solution will require an integrated and comprehensive interagency approach to programming.

The Environmental Scan

Once a commitment was made to develop some sort of programmatic initiative, these policy entrepreneurs typically conducted an informal environmental scan to determine where there was interest in the development of such initiatives and where there was likely to be opposition to them. In the process of conducting the scan, they addressed questions about what agencies or sub-units of agencies have the interest and capacity to either provide or collaborate in the provision of the family support and education initiative. In the past, decisions about a sponsoring agency have been academic insofar as the policy entrepreneurs were usually intent on developing family support and education initiatives within their own agency or had a preferred one in mind. Now, however, when there may well be multiple initiatives within a state, considerations of which agency or agencies have the need, interest, and capacity to develop these programs are very important.

Those who have developed these state initiatives have in common their constant attention, from the outset, to understanding the views and positions of most or all of

the various actors within the state who could affect the adoption and eventual implementation of the initiative. In surfacing the potential supporters and adversaries for the initiative, the environmental scan was typically broad, and included inquiries about the likely views of members of the following groups: the business community, different advocacy groups, service providers, legislators, the staff in one's own and other state agencies, and of the Governor and his or her own staff. Once potential supporters and adversaries were identified, the entrepreneurial planning group typically worked through any specific obstacles posed by the potential opposition and then developed strategies for how, when, and who would handle both initial supporters and opponents.

Our research suggests that top-level support from the governor, a commissioner, or key legislators, was important to obtain as soon as possible in order to insure that the initiative would receive the support and resources necessary to move to the stage of program formulation. These states used a variety of strategies to develop broad support outside the planning group. These include member's participation on commissions and task forces, and the formation of alliances with other groups intent on helping to frame the state's response to a particular social problem, like teen pregnancy. These various strategies were pursued very successfully by the entrepreneurial team developing initial support for Maryland's Family Support Center Initiative (Hausman, 1989).

Inserting the Initiative Onto the Agenda and Anticipating Opposition

Typically, the planning team carefully and skillfully inserted the family support in education initiative into the prevailing policy agenda of the state and the potential sponsoring agency and then looked for opportunities to move it as close to the top of the agenda as necessary to get a set of pilot programs launched. In several states, these entrepreneurial teams also have been successful at getting family support and education programs on to the agenda in such a way that they are able to support the claims of potential adversaries and to minimize the possibility that the initiative would set off intense competition for scarce resources. They have also been skilled at anticipating where opposition to the initiative was likely to come from, and then in sidestepping, co-opting, or diffusing it.

In Minnesota, for example, those generating support for the Early Childhood Family Education program recognized the potential of opposition from the child care provider community (Seppanen, 1989). Therefore, they included child care representatives on the Advisory Board, informally kept in touch with providers, and crafted the core components of the program to exclude straight child care provision. This strategy resulted in a programmatic initiative that the child care community could support.

It is important to recognize that opposition can come from within the sponsoring state agency also. So, for example, in some states, when family support and education programs were surfaced as a child welfare prevention initiative, other parts of the agency saw it as a drain on already scarce resources for families in crisis. Each state is likely to have its own opponents within and outside sponsoring agencies. What the pioneers had in common was development of careful plans to deal with them both initially and subsequently.

The Importance of the Rationale and the Language to Describe It

Once a broad and diverse planning group has come together and worked through what the basic goals of a family support and education initiative are to be for families, the sponsoring agency and for the state, the planning groups typically set about framing the specifics of the initiative and describing it in such a way that a broad coalition can get behind it. This means, for example, framing the rationale for and particulars of family support and education programs in such a way that it can attract bipartisan political support (Harvard Family Research Project, 1989). Our research in this regard suggests that the language used to describe the initiative is particularly important. Typically, the pioneering states have described the programs and their rationale in such a way that they stress the interdependence of family and community,

and in so doing, they frame the initiative in such a way that both the family and the government have responsibility for creating a nurturing environment for human development. They describe how the programs will achieve the aims often expressed by conservatives; strengthening and promoting well functioning, independent, and self supporting families, which will in turn produce children who will be independent and self-supporting adults. Similarly, in accord with a more liberal perspective, they describe the initiative in terms of governmental responsibility to provide extra-familial and publicly-funded support to promote effective family functioning and human development. The result in many states is that these programs then get beyond previously acrimonious debates about family policy (for example, those that took place in the early 1980s at State White House Conferences on the Family) and then provide a middle ground where both conservatives and liberals can join together to support programs designed to strengthen families and communities as contexts for human development. So in formulating and planning an initiative, it is critical to determine the prevailing beliefs in the state about the role of government in family life and to describe family support and education initiatives in ways that can create the broadest possible support.

Persistence and Peer Support

It should be evident that the process of getting the initiative on the agenda and attaining the support necessary to formulate a program typically has taken a considerable amount of time and that it requires the planning team to nurture and maintain relationships with a broad set of individuals and groups who support and could oppose the initiative within the state. The later pioneering states' experiences also indicate the value of consulting with people in other states that have developed initiatives to get ideas and information not only about their program models but also about how they have their specific initiative on the public agenda.

Using Evidence Appropriately

Finally, in generating support for a set of pilot programs, the planning groups also pulled together whatever evidence they could find that would demonstrate the effectiveness and potential public payoff of investment in the provision of family support and education programs. This has been difficult because evidence has been available from relatively few programs that have been able to conduct systematic evaluations. Moreover, the evidence does not indicate whether such programs can be replicated or adapted as part of a large state system and then produce the same positive outcomes. It is sufficient to indicate here that in the process of selling the initiative by citing evidence about the effectiveness of these programs, it is important that they not be oversold and that the limits of available evidence be noted. Further,

in selling the programs and noting their promise with respect to affecting "rotten outcomes" (Schorr, 1988) for children and families, it is a useful exercise for those planning the initiative to make sure that they do not make claims for the programs for which they do not want to be held accountable down the line. This exercise should help to avoid any tendency to over promise what these programs can realistically produce.

II. Program Formulation

Once the group of people planning the initiative have a clear sense of what the family support and education initiative is to accomplish for sponsoring agencies, communities, and families, they then have the job of specifying what the programs will look like, and addressing a set of questions which define the contours of the programs. These include basic questions about who will deliver the services, who will receive them, what specific services will be provided, and where the services will be administered and delivered. These questions are highly interrelated. For example, decisions about who will receive the services are connected to questions about what kinds of program components are necessary to meet the needs of the designated target group. For our purposes here, however, we will examine these questions separately for

the most part and we will illustrate the ways in which the pioneering states have addressed them.

Determining the Initial Scale of the Initiative

One of the first questions to consider is the initial scale of the state's initiative. In the past, all of the states initiating family support and education programs have begun small with a few pilot programs. None of these states has begun programs by means of a large-scale legislative or agency-mandate specifying that the provision of such services are mandatory for any agency. Rather, the program formulators have chosen to begin with a strategy of capacity building and of amassing the necessary resources and expertise to build a state system of programs slowly. Although broad interest in these programs may allow new states to start with a larger number of initial pilot programs in the family support and education area, the overall strategy of beginning with pilot programs has a lot to commend it.

As Tableman (1986) argued, based on her experiences developing prevention programming within a state department of mental health, new programs can sometimes be perceived as a threat by the home agency; therefore, beginning with a pilot demonstration program is "an extraordinarily effective way to feed innovation into a state system." (p. 339). In addition to being initially less threatening, beginning with pilot programs gives those at the state level who will be building the state program

system an opportunity to build a strong set of programs which are operating in accord with family support and education principles. This is no small task, as these programs represent a substantially new way of doing business with families, and often are a departure from the ways in which the state and/or its counterparts or agents in the local community have provided services. Starting small allowed the usually small staff to concentrate their scarce resources and attention on getting a small number of programs trying to implement a new type of program or service up to speed. Starting small also provides the opportunity to build the broad constituency in favor of these programs that appears to be necessary to institutionalize the initiative or provide programs on a broader basis. In most of the states we have examined, the initial pilot programs were very well placed, so that the versatility and implementability of the program in different parts of a state could be demonstrated, and so that key legislators were likely to have a program in their district. From another perspective, beginning with a few pilots and gradually increasing the number of them allows the system of programs to get to a point where they can reasonably sustain outcome evaluations and thus provide information about whether the initiative has promise of being a wise public investment.

Starting small with pilots also means that the new initiative will probably not have to incur the problems associated with commanding substantial financial resources from already existing programs. Most of the initiatives with which we are familiar have

begun in the first year with $300,000 or less. This amount is probably small enough not to threaten other programs, while at the same time being sufficient to get a small set of pilot programs on the ground. It is also important not to start too small or to spread the initial resources too thin across too many programs. The danger in this is that there will not be sufficient resources to put together services of sufficient density and comprehensiveness to make any difference for families, or to warrant a local agency's efforts to apply for funds and their endeavor to deliver new services in line with family support and education principles.

Who Decides What: Working Through the State and Local Partnership

Once the decision is made to create pilot programs, the program formulators face a set of decisions which will determine the contours of the state initiative and which have important implications for the evolving relationship between the state and local programs. Specifically, the areas and degree to which the state attempts to standardize the program or to allow flexibility and decision-making by the local pilot programs has a large impact on how community-responsive and perhaps on how effective the programs will be. In many of the states we have examined, program formulators have attempted to address basic questions about program design in such a way that everything is not specified from the top down, nor are all decisions made solely by the local programs. Rather, they have tried to develop a hybrid decision-

making relationship between the state and local programs by having the state specify basic elements of the program but allowing for considerable local flexibility and variation on some important dimensions. They have tried to allow this flexibility and variation while at the same time having enough standardization to ensure that programs can meet the goals that have been specified for the initiatives. Determination of what elements of a program the state will specify and what will be left to local programs is thus critical for many interrelated reasons.

At the outset, program formulators face critical decisions about how much to standardize programs and how much to encourage local flexibility and variation in the areas noted below. We first list the areas and then describe how different states have addressed them.

1. **Specification of general program goals and components.** For example, is the program designed primarily to promote child development, or adult development in conjunction with child development (through provision of literacy, GED, or job training services)? What are the minimum types and amounts of services that the local program should provide? How precisely are the contents of program components specified (for example, what a good early childhood program consists of, or aspects of a parenting curriculum)?

2. **Specification of where the program belongs administratively.** If the initiative is based within the public schools, does it belong under K-12, community education, or early childhood, or is this choice best left to district discretion? If the initiative is sponsored by a state human services or public health department, will it be developed as a separate unit, put in an existing public or private local line agency, or will any local agency be eligible to apply for a pilot program grant? Whatever the local auspices, will the state require that the local grantee coordinate or collaborate with other relevant agencies?

3. **Specification of the population to be served.** Is the program to be targeted to particular groups (e.g., at-risk infants and their parents) or open on a universal basis? What mechanisms will be provided to make sure that the program is reaching the intended population?

4. **Specification of whether, and how, the program is to work with other local programs for families, including pre-existing family support and education programs.** Can the program subcontract with pre-existing programs to get parent support and education services? What arrangements should be made for information and referral with other agencies?

5. Specification of the characteristics and training of staff and of plans for certification and for provision of in-service training. Are parent educators available or certified for programs in the state? Does a new training and certification system need to be created? What state and local training should/will be available?

6. Specification of what it means to be a community-based program. Is there a need and if so, what are criteria for participation in advisory groups? What groups should be represented and what will their role be in relation to program governance?

7. What means and arrangements will there be to evaluate the program and insure accountability? Will this be a state responsibility? What evaluation strategies are appropriate to assist with program local development, development of a strong state program system, and to document effectiveness?

However each state has responded to these questions, at a minimum all have recognized how critically important it is that local programs have flexibility and choice in many areas. They recognize the importance of a local program's sense of ownership or co-ownership and that some flexibility may enhance the chances of successful implementation because the local program can tailor the program in accord with local needs and resources. Some particular areas where all states have allowed flexibility for

local decisions include: how and where the services are delivered; development or adaptation of curriculum materials and program formats; opportunities to create relationships with other community agencies; and outreach strategies.

Specification of a Model or of Core Services

Each of the states that we have examined has developed their own program "model." None of them has attempted to replicate a model developed by another state, although several have put together pre-existing models to make their own family support and education program. Kentucky, for example, in creating the PACE program, used the curriculum and approach developed by High Scope for its early childhood program component. Minnesota has specified that each local ECFE program have an early childhood component and has put together a resource guide for local programs to use in finding program models to adapt to their circumstances.

This pattern of each state creating its own model may change in the future, as more state models are available from which others can learn. It is likely, however, if the experience of local programs is a guide, that even if states attempt to replicate a model developed elsewhere, they will find it necessary to adapt it to meet the needs of their particular population and circumstances. Further, the states with models now find that their models are still evolving and note this to potential replicators and adaptors.

Therefore, it is probably wise for new states to get all the information they can about other states' activities and models but to recognize that they will have to adapt them accordingly. This is not least because it may be important to allow the opportunity to create and own a "new" approach or model. This is because the energy that comes from creating something "new and special" may be important to getting the initiative both up and going and sustained in the long haul.

Over time, each of the states has specified a core set of services which each local program must provide in order to achieve the goals of the initiative, although they vary in how precisely they define and specify different aspects of these core services. Maryland specifies core services, while Missouri expects local school districts to implement a particular curriculum. Through their training mechanisms, state staff work with local programs to build and support their capacity to offer these services, and some states then monitor to assure the quality of local programs.

Specification of Who Provides the Services at the State and Local Level

State initiatives to date have been developed by a single state agency, but there is considerable variation in state specification of who is eligible to be a local service provider. Education initiatives have typically flowed from the state department of education to the local school district. So, for example, Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education Program, Missouri's Parents As Teachers Program, and Kentucky's

Parent and Child Education Program, each provide money from the state department of education to the local school district so that they can provide and administer the services. The Oregon State Department of Education's Together for Children initiative is an exception, insofar as like the social service initiatives, the state funds a variety of local non-education agencies. The initiatives done in conjunction with human services in Connecticut (Parent Support and Education Centers) and Maryland (Family Support Centers) are set up so that the state department can fund a diverse set of local agencies including churches, housing projects, community based organizations, and existing social service agencies.

Decisions about which local agencies are eligible to apply for pilot funds should take into account the capacity of different agencies, their community credibility, the likelihood that the local agency can foster interagency collaboration, and questions of whether the state initiative is intended to contribute to the reform of the state agencies' local representatives (for example, to make schools more responsive to families) or whether they are to add to the continuum of services available to families in the community. These decisions should also take into account the fact that many communities have pre-existing programs that deliver family support and education services and consider the following types of issues: should they be given favorable treatment in the grant application process? Should local pilot programs be required to work with them? Consideration should also be given to which sub-unit within a

particular state or local agency has the visibility, capacity, belief, and commitment to develop the initiative. Finally, attention should be paid to questions about where within the state or local agency there is the freedom to innovate and manage programs which require a different relationship with families and communities than is typical in public services. What part of the agency will both protect the initiative and insulate it from the inevitable problems that occur when starting a new initiative? Should the initiative be a public-private partnership rather than solely an agency one?

Specification of Who Will Receive the Program

Our research suggests that the decision about whether to mount the initiative as a universal or targeted service is usually made at the state level and that it is a difficult one, involving complex trade-offs. Both Minnesota and Missouri mounted their family support and education initiatives on a universal basis. In Missouri these programs are open to anyone in local school districts with children 0-3 and in Minnesota it is 0-6. Kentucky has targeted its pilot programs to the districts with the highest adult illiteracy and school dropout rates. In order to get family support and education programs on the state agenda, Maryland initially targeted its family support centers to teen parents, although one center is now open to all young parents in the area.

The states offering programs on a universal basis argue that in making the program universal, they minimize any possible stigma that might be associated with

targeted programs. Efforts to minimize stigma may be especially important for programs initiated by human service agencies where chances of stigma for program participants may be greater than in the case of education initiatives. Informants in Minnesota and Missouri also indicated there are political reasons to support universal programs. Specifically, they suggested that broad political support was necessary to get the legislation authorizing the programs on a statewide basis passed. These informants also noted that political support from middle-class voters was important for continued legislative support of the program and that in some cases, there is a middle-class backlash against services targeted to particular groups.

Once universal programs are in place, evaluations of their outreach and effectiveness with high-risk families prompt questions about whether they can indeed reach and serve these groups. This, then, raises questions about equity. In some places, it appears that without substantial outreach efforts and differentiated programming, it is only possible to attract and serve families that are easy to reach, posing the danger that such programs will become simply another benefit for the middle class. Connecticut and Oregon have attempted to deal with this by creating universal programs which are required to serve a certain percentage of at-risk populations.

Those who are developing programs targeted to certain groups considered to be at-risk cite the logic of allocating scarce resources to those most in need. They also

stress the need to develop population-specific program models and to get sufficient resources at the outset to serve groups that are difficult to reach and serve. However, proponents of targeted services have to contend with an imprecise technology for determining who is genuinely at-risk, and with the problems that are sometimes solved by universal models. These are the possible stigmatizing effects of participation in the program and the possible political problems associated with the middle-class or rural voter's lack of support for programs that are targeted to at-risk, usually poor, urban populations.

One resolution of the complex question of who these programs should serve involves a combined strategy in which the state defines the overall initiative as a universal one but then provides more intensive or different services for certain groups. The universal programs might be available with a sliding-fee scale. This strategy appears to be developing in both Minnesota and Missouri, where their universal programs are now being supplemented and differentiated in order to meet the needs of highly stressed families. In Minneapolis, for example, ECFE staff are providing the basic minimum services in neighborhoods around the city, while at a same time joining with other community agencies such as hospitals and social services to provide more differentiated services to high-risk families. Similarly, in Missouri, the St. Louis PAT program has begun to provide more intensive services for teen mothers and others regarded to be at risk.

If this combination is not feasible, those considering a targeted program should ask if there are ways to frame the initiative that will not preclude subsequent addition of other groups and also who else presently targets the group for what services. Those considering a universal approach should ask if the program will have the capacity and resources to reach and effectively serve high risk families. The answers to either set of questions may lead in turn to consideration of joint, interagency planning and possibly to joint initiatives in order to maximize resources and avoid service duplication and fragmentation.

Specification of Whether and How the Program is to Coordinate or Collaborate with Other Local Programs

The states differ in whether and how much they specify that local programs either must work with other agencies or services. Some encourage coordination through the specification of core services (for example, through required provision of information and referral services); others do so through legislative language or allocation of resources for coordination with other services. While there have been no state level joint initiatives to date, there are a number of state-sponsored local programs that have gotten beyond simple coordination through information and referral arrangements to closer collaborative co-programming arrangements with other agencies.

The need for coordination at a minimum, and the benefits of going beyond that to develop collaborative co-programming arrangements, is evident from the experiences several of the pioneering states have encountered in their efforts to serve high-risk families. While the examples below come from states which have legislated universal programs, their experience is also relevant insofar as state programs that are targeted exclusively to high-risk families rarely can themselves alone provide sufficiently comprehensive and intensive services to meet the needs of these families.

The experience of local ECFE (Minnesota) and PAT (Missouri) programs indicates that these programs are often the first to identify a local family as being at-risk. Interviews with the directors and school personnel associated with these programs suggest that by design, and often by default, they function as a screening mechanism during the period prior to public school entry. Few other agencies in the community have regular contact with children and families before the child enters the public school. Some programs, such as PAT, include screening as a regular part of the services; however, informally, many other programs detect both child and family problems that call for additional assistance beyond that which the program itself can provide. One of the chief ways programs address this problem is through information and referral for individual participants. At the program level, our research shows that programs put considerable effort into the creation of formal and informal linkages and coordination with other community agencies. Nonetheless, many program directors

report that they still cannot meet the needs of many of the high-risk families that they identify. The experiences of these two-state programs makes it clear that most school systems cannot take on all of the responsibility for enhancing child development and strengthening families.

As a result, the need to provide more comprehensive services for high-risk families has led a number of these two state's local programs to develop joint initiatives with other community agencies and to create broader partnerships in order to develop larger systems of comprehensive, continuous, and intensive services for at-risk families. The experience of some local ECFE and PAT programs suggests that a family support and education program can make a unique contribution to an inter-agency service package because unlike many other community programs they are two-generational and designed to facilitate both the parent's and the child's development.

To illustrate what co-programming looks like, two Minnesota examples are described here. Both of Minnesota's Twin Cities are currently designing comprehensive programs for at-risk families in which the school-based ECFE program would be a partner with other community agencies. In St. Paul, for example, the Amherst Wilder Foundation has spearheaded a three-way partnership between the St. Paul Department of Public Health, the Department of Social Services, and the ECFE Program. Public-health nurses assess the stresses and supports of families at birth, and then provide an

array of services in conjunction with the social service department and the ECFE program.

In Minneapolis, the ECFE program is a partner in a larger proposed plan to promote the school readiness of that city's children. That plan, titled Way to Grow (Kurz-Riemer, Larson, & Fluornoy, 1987), is designed to coordinate the activities of a variety of community agencies into a continuous, intensive array of services to meet the needs of at-risk children and families. The proposed partners in the plan include the ECFE program, public health nurses, and social services.

There are a variety of ways in which the state can facilitate local cooperation among programs offering family support and education services, or can sometimes facilitate a more intensive collaborative involvement. These mechanisms include: 1) defining the core services of the model broadly, and thereby increasing the likelihood that several community agencies will have to collaborate to prove the services specified in the state's request for proposals (this has been done in the case of the family support centers in Maryland); 2) by specifying the need to work with other agencies or to avoid duplication of services with other agencies in the community (this has been done in Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education program legislation); 3) encouraging joint programming efforts (this has been done in some of the joint initiatives in Minnesota that are described above); 4) by encouraging local programs to subcontract with other agencies in the area that have experience in providing relevant

services (this has been done in the Minnesota legislation); and 5) by encouraging a collaboration by giving a particular kind of agency, for example, a child care center, resources for them to develop a family support and education component (this has been done in the case of Connecticut's Parent Support and Education Centers). In sum, despite all the problems with turf, there may be ways that in crafting their programs, states can promote local cooperation and even collaboration.

Specification of Program Staff and Building the Supply of Staff

The issue of the state's role in building the capacity, particularly the human capacity, to deliver new services in a state-sponsored system of programs should be considered early on in the pilot program stage. A large number of people trained -- or even experienced -- in working with parents and in facilitating adult development is not available in many communities. Staff often need substantial training in order to work with families in the new way prescribed by these programs.

Early attention also needs to go into determining what the certification requirements, pay scales, and opportunities for career growth for staff in these programs should be in order to attract and keep high quality staff. We have found that state-sponsored initiatives make early efforts to deal with these issues to regulate

program quality and reduce staff turnover and/or burnout. But policies in these areas must also consider that family support and education programs need flexibility in order to be able to hire staff with personal characteristics and skills that enable them to act in accord with the principles underlying family support and education programs. Not the least of these characteristics is the capacity to treat parent participants as partners, something which is difficult to assess by credentials alone.

Specifying the Community Base and Maintaining the Community Element in Community Based Family Support and Education Programs

Another issue that should be considered from the outset is the question of how to maintain community input, sensitivity, and a sense of local co-ownership of the program. Several of the states have developed a process to do this. It includes soliciting the views of a variety of community organizations and potential program participants from the outset when the planners are attempting to put the initiative on the public policy agenda. Active contact is then maintained throughout the process of defining the contours of the state initiative. Some states have also encouraged local organizations to stay in touch with their community by requiring that local grant applicants conduct a community needs assessment and map available resources as part

of the application process. Finally, several states have required that local programs set up local advisory groups with broad representation from community agencies, community based organizations, program participants, and others in the local community.

Early in the planning process, it is important for planners to decide what it means to develop a community based program and to define what "community" means in this regard. Is it simply that money will be given to agencies that are in a local community? Is it that those agencies will commit themselves to continuous needs assessment and involvement of community members in the planning and evolution of the local program? Is it that the state will allow variation among programs so they can tailor their services in accord with local needs? Is it that there will be a community advisory board with decision making power, or is it something else?

Specification of Mechanisms for Evaluation and Accountability

Family support and education programs are a relatively new type of human service. In order to legitimize these programs and develop the most effective types of programs for different types of families, it is important to build careful multi-stage evaluations into the pilot programs from the outset. In another paper for the Colloquium (Weiss & Halpern, 1989), a strategy for evaluating new state initiatives which is designed to provide the necessary information for different states of state

program development is laid out in detail. So it is sufficient to note here that if evaluation research is to be truly useful for program growth and development, the conception of evaluation needs to be broadened from simple outcome assessment to include documentation of program processes and implementation.

III. Pilot Program Implementation and Growth

After states have addressed the issues laid out above and specified the elements of the local pilot programs, they move into the stage of choosing their pilot sites and beginning program implementation. At this point the state's role has evolved to one of capacity building, technical assistance, monitoring to insure accountability, and development of multi-stage evaluation plans. The need for leadership and constant attention to building a constituency for the program at the state and local level continues, but state staff time and energy usually shift to building strong local programs and determining how to use the usually scarce state resources for technical assistance and support in the most efficacious ways possible. We will touch on each of these areas briefly here.

Our research suggests that capacity building efforts should provide the following:

1. A method for providing sustained technical assistance with program planning and implementation issues to local programs.

2. A system for providing ongoing training -- pre-service and inservice -- for local administrators and service providers in order to build skills and knowledge and to foster a strong ideological commitment to family support and education as well as an understanding of the program and curriculum.

3. The development of a peer network and a partnership relationship between state and local programs. These are helpful in building a two-way channel and to obtain input from local service providers about such areas as the creation of state program guidelines; in the development and dissemination of information about curriculum, outreach, and coordinating services with other agencies.

4. A method for supporting local providers through the use of newsletters and promotional materials, and the establishment of a "professional" association.

5. Attention to ongoing state- and local-level networking and constituency building to maintain support for the initiative within the legislature and across agency lines.

6. Methods and strategies to help local programs deal with some of the inevitable problems of inserting themselves within their local sponsoring agency, whether this be a school, a community-based organization, or some other entity.

In the process of capacity building for an increasingly larger system of state programs, several states also have confronted longer-term issues of labor quality and supply with program expansion. Some of the states are now working with their colleges and universities and other training providers such as Head Start in order to get

assistance with training and certification. Some states, such as Missouri, have set up their own training institute. As some of the state programs have expanded and evolved, state staff have also confronted the issue of developing more specific requirements which have to be met by the staff of local programs. In crafting their positions on staff composition, training and certification, these states have tried to balance their evolving sense of what skills and expertise are necessary for strong local programs, and their view that there is a need for some state standardization to ensure quality programs with the realities of limited local labor supply, sometimes non-competitive pay scales and the desire to allow local flexibility on staff selection.

Modeling Partnerships

In their approach to capacity building and in developing their relationships with local programs, state staff have tried to build the kind of peer support among their programs that they hope the programs will build for their participating parents. In their relationships with local programs, states' staff also try to model the kinds of partnership and empowering relationships that they hope programs will establish with families. Modeling these relationships and building local capacity are extraordinarily demanding jobs and require talented and committed state staff who understand the principles underlying family support and education programs and can operationalize them throughout the state system.

Monitoring and Assuring Accountability.

Formally or informally, the pioneering states have also dealt with the state's responsibility to define quality standards for local programs and make sure that they are attained. In a number of states, this has involved state development of a management information system which allows the state to track who and how many participants the programs serve and how staff use resources. Some states, such as Minnesota and Missouri, have developed formal quality standards in conjunction with local programs. These standards are then used by the state as well as by local programs themselves for assessment purposes. Some of the states have structured their quality assurance procedures so that pilot programs can be de-funded; others have to work hard to convince those not up to minimum standards to improve. Particularly in the pilot stage, it is important to define quality standards and core services so that when a local pilot program is not meeting them it is possible to remedy the situation through de-funding or other means. It is also important to anticipate the point when the program is no longer in the pilot stage, and to develop quality control mechanisms that are appropriate for that point.

Our research shows that there can sometimes be tension between state efforts to maintain quality control and local efforts to provide community-responsive and flexible programming in order to meet the needs of diverse families. Careful consideration

should be given to how a state can monitor and maintain quality without overly homogenizing the programs. One of the principle strengths of the family support movement has been the recognition that, just as there is no one type of American family, there can be no one type of universally-effective program. Promoting quality while maintaining diversity, then, is one of the primary challenges inherent in these new state initiatives.

Finally, several of the pioneering states have developed process and implementation studies which provide them with feedback about the difficulties of local program implementation. They then typically devise ways of providing technical assistance to local programs in order to help them remedy the difficulties. In sum, the pioneering states have crafted a carrot-and-sometimes-a-stick approach to insuring accountability and local program quality.

Maintaining the Visibility and Momentum of the Initiative.

In our ongoing research on the state initiatives, it is very clear that from day one onward, both local and state program directors have had to attend regularly to constituency building and to keeping key decision makers apprised of the program's progress. Each year, program directors appear at legislative hearings and provide materials and witnesses who attest to the successful development of the programs. Each is aware that while evidence about successful implementation of the program and

about effectiveness is important for program maintenance and expansion, so are informed and supportive policy makers.

State program staff have also had to be continuously alert to competing claims for resources. Now that their programs have developed a fragile toe-hold within their state agencies, they are beginning to confront some backlash, both from within and from other agencies. The more mature state efforts, especially, have begun to compete for dollars that other agency staff would like to see allocated elsewhere. In the case of the education agencies, there are questions about whether to allocate money, for example, to school-based programs for at-risk four and five-year-olds rather than to these family-oriented interventions. In the social service agencies, there is some tension about allocating money for prevention when resources for crisis intervention and treatment are regarded as seriously insufficient. Our research suggests that there is never a point -- at least in the pilot stage -- when the state staff can relax and assume that the program will be there next year with the same or a higher level of resources.

Moreover, now that these programs have grown and acquired visibility at both the state and local levels, other parts of their sponsoring agency or, in some cases, outside agencies, have begun to initiate struggles for control of the initiatives. So, for example, in some cases, the K-12 part of the education system wants to control a program under early childhood auspices. Or in the case of social service initiatives, a local social service agency wants to control services and resources now under the

auspices of alternative community organizations. If as their planners hope, these programs eventually get more funding and begin to realign agency budgets so that more resources are available for preventive programs, more opposition to their expansion and struggles to take over the initiatives are likely.

The Mixed Blessings of Growth

Success and visibility also bring other challenges. A number of the pioneering initiatives experienced relatively slow growth in the pilot stage. This has been considered beneficial. Now a number of state initiatives are being pressed to expand, sometimes very quickly. This situation can put state program directors in a dilemma insofar as they would like to take advantage of the momentum to get increased resources while at the same time they recognize that rapid expansion raises important questions about how to manage program growth. Embedded in this larger question is a set of specific and difficult ones about how quickly a program can expand and still maintain quality, how to recruit and train staff to meet the needs of many new programs, how to choose among competing agencies and make sure that there are appropriate homes for the programs, and how to build the necessary state infrastructure to monitor and support many local programs.

Some of the older initiatives, most notably Minnesota and Missouri, have gone through a "famine to feast to famine" cycle of development and have confronted the

demonstration dilution dilemma. Specifically, both of these state initiatives began with a few pilot programs and then had to set up programs at many sites in a very short amount of time when state legislation was passed establishing them on a wide-spread basis. This "famine to feast" part of the cycle was associated with quick growth and budget expansion. The third stage of the cycle, the feast to famine part, occurs when the funding does not increase proportionately as additional responsibilities or substantially more participants are added to the program.

As new states consider the development of these programs, it is important to keep both of these cycles in mind and to raise two fundamental questions about the necessary level of resources for these programs: What are the minimum kinds and amounts of services necessary for a program to have an impact within the community and how can this level of services be maintained as the program grows? And, secondly, what is the minimum amount of funding necessary per program? Other longer-term issues with financial implications include: The need to train a cadre of people able to serve both children and parents in an uncharted "discipline", the need to offer competitive wages in order to attract and retain competent staff; and the need to determine what program resources are necessary to effectively reach and serve high risk families with multiple stresses. These always pre-eminent resource issues must be kept in mind as the state staff educate their state's policy makers and keep them informed about the progress of the pilot programs.

IV. Issues For Policy Makers in the Formulation and Implementation of Family Support and Education Initiatives

In this paper and others for the Colloquium, just what constitutes a family support and education program has been, and should be, broadly defined. It is recognized that efforts to strengthen families are not the province of any one professional group or state agency. However, because this broad definition sometimes means that family support and education programs are seen as all things to all people, there is a danger that they will be nothing for anyone. One very real aspect of this danger is that very superficial and sparsely funded programs will result from the current interest in these programs. This has already begun to happen. For example, some school districts offer three lectures on parenting education a year as their family support and education effort. This may be good public relations, but it is not likely to have major effects on parenting or child development.

To avoid such very superficial efforts, there are several important considerations to keep in mind if the state's family support and education programs are to have a chance of being effective for anyone, but particularly for high-risk families. First, it is critical that in formulating these programs, they be understood and advocated within the context of a state's overall services and policies for families. It should be recognized that these programs are not a substitute for other necessary family services

-- such as adequate health care, housing, food, child care and income. In fact, the effectiveness of these programs is at least partly dependent on the basic needs of participating families being met.

At the state and community level, this in turn means that analysts must examine how and where these programs fit within a broader continuum of preventive and rehabilitative services for children and families. These programs are now emerging as a distinct set of services and helping strategies which may be either free-standing or used to enrich diverse existing child and family-serving programs. Those putting together the coalitions necessary to develop these programs now face a particularly difficult challenge: They must argue for a share of scarce state resources and differentiate themselves from existing services, at the same time that they support advocates of other necessary services and attempt to coordinate service delivery with them.

Second, it is also important to recognize that adequate resources, both financial and in terms of skills and services, are necessary to reach and serve high-risk families. This point is evident from the experience of hundreds of programs trying to serve these populations around the country and also from accumulating evaluation evidence (Halpern & Weiss, 1989). From a policy perspective, the implications of this are that from the outset, when a state strategy is crafted, the resource question must be given high priority and program arrangements must be specified to provide for program

models which are comprehensive, intensive, and continuous enough to meet the needs of this population.

Third, our research suggests, as previously noted, that as programs move from senior pilot status to institutionalization through legislation establishing them on a broader and sometimes statewide basis, there is some danger that there will be a dilution of resources which may curtail a program's capacity to reach and serve high-risk families. Missouri's Parents As Teachers Program, for example, provided more home visits in the pilot stage than state legislation currently mandates each district will be reimbursed to provide. Recognizing that more home visits and other services are essential to reach and serve high-risk families, Parents As Teachers programs around the state are now putting together other resources, for example from desegregation funds in the cases of St. Louis and Kansas City, in order to supplement the money the legislature has allocated for Parents As Teachers. This strategy allows them to provide more intensive services for high-risk families. It is important to seriously consider the demonstration dilution dilemma -- and it is a dilemma insofar that if the programs appear to be successful, one wants to expand them despite risk of resource restraints but to try and anticipate ways to minimize its impact. One way obviously involves trying to promote program expansion and institutionalization while at the same time channeling different funding streams together in order to accumulate sufficient resources.

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Fourth, it is clear from all of the research that has been done on state interagency collaboration, that it is a very difficult thing to achieve. Short of that, however, our research suggests that there are ways that a single state agency initiative can be designed to facilitate collaboration at the local level. Moreover, as family support and education programs get established and stabilized under the auspices of a single agency, it may be possible for other state agencies to allocate some of their resources to the agency's program if the donor agency's goals can be met through the program. For example, in Maryland's case, other state agencies, including the State Department of Education, are allocating resources to the Family Support Centers (sponsored by a public-private partnership including the Department of Human Resources) because the latter's program model includes a variety of educational services. Similarly, money from another state agency's employment and training funds are being allocated to the Family Support Centers because they have demonstrated that they are able to reach at-risk youths and provide them with such services. So when a single state agency defines the core components in their local family support and education programs, defining them broadly may achieve several ends. These include a better change to meet the needs of high-risk families, the possibility of attaining collaborative funding and the possibility of attaining collaboration among agencies at the local level.

Sensitive Issues of Family Privacy and Voluntary Program Participation

The current broadening interest and provision of state-sponsored programs also brings with it a set of extremely sensitive and complex questions about public intrusion in family life. In the past, Americans have been reluctant to intervene in families except under very serious circumstances, when it is necessary to remove a child from a home, for example. In the twentieth century, particularly during the progressive era and most recently during the War On Poverty, it has been appropriate to intervene in family life through programs in settlement houses and then through Head Start and a number of other more family-oriented early interventions developed during these periods. However, a family's participation in such programs has always been voluntary. Now, there are some instances where family support and education programs are becoming mandatory.

The most recent example of this was described a month ago in an article in the Boston Globe describing the situation of Geraldine Churchwell, a mother of young children who was a resident of a state-supported homeless shelter. She was evicted from the center because she refused to participate in classes in child-rearing, nutrition and birth control. The shelter's program director is quoted as saying, "The contract they signed with the Department of Public Welfare is that they participate in these programs. It's not a negotiable point." Instances such as this raise the following types

of questions. Is the effectiveness of family support and education programs dependent on voluntary participation? Should participation be mandatory for some groups, for example, teenage mothers on welfare who are participating in programs through welfare reform? Is there sufficient evidence about the effectiveness of these programs to warrant mandatory participation? Or, as homeless advocates for Ms. Churchwell note, are such programs unnecessarily coercive and forcing lifestyle changes on people solely because they are poor? These are exceedingly difficult questions, but it is clear that they now need to be addressed as states formulate their policies and consider appropriate state and local auspices and goals for family support and education programs.

Difficulties Implementing Programs in Accord with Family Support and Education Principles

It is also important that those crafting new state initiatives plan for the fact that it is difficult to implement these programs through large public systems in accord with the principles which have underlain grass roots family support and education programs. It is not impossible, but difficult, and as a result requires that state capacity building efforts be built with recognition of the difficulties in mind. More and more program directors are beginning to write about some of the issues in actually delivering family support and education programs, particularly to high-risk families, and their work

should be very helpful in developing state initiatives. We will not summarize this literature here (see Weiss & Halpern, 1988) except to suggest that there are substantial challenges in implementing programs in accord with family support and education principles. Some of these challenges include: implementing non-deficit programs that emphasize family strengths with extremely high-risk families; balancing the sometimes competing needs of parents and children in high-risk families; attaining the levels and types of resources necessary to serve different population groups effectively; and ascertaining when the services of very highly-trained professionals are necessary.

Some of the practical demands of day-to-day work with parents, particularly those who are severely disadvantaged, are especially well summarized by two practitioners who created an intensive family support and education program, the Yale Child Welfare Research Project, during the War On Poverty. They note that the central challenge for those working with parents is to "Distinguish in one's work . . . between outreach and intrusiveness, between guiding parents and lecturing them, between providing them with the tangible supports they appear to need and enabling them to get these for themselves, between imposing, even in a benevolent fashion, one's goals for them and helping them to define and consider their goals for themselves." (Provence and Naylor, 1983, p. 161). The difficulties in achieving such a balance should not be underestimated.

As new states consider the development of family support and education programs and policies they should not minimize either the challenge or the promise of moving family support and education programs from the grass roots to widespread state sponsorship. The experiences of the earlier pioneers suggest it is important to aim high, go slow, don't over-promise, and to recognize it's going to take knowledge from many people about many things -- about everything from human development to how state bureaucracies work and change -- for family support and education programs to realize their potential as part of new policies to support families.

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1. See Chisman, 1989.

2. See Right From the Start, 1988.

3. See Chamberlin, 1988, and A Guide for State Action: Early Childhood and Family Education, from the Resource Center on Educational Equity, Council of Chief State School Officers, 400 North Capitol St., N.W., Suite 379, Washington, D.C. 20001, 1988.

4. See Family Support in the Home: Home Visiting Programs and P.L. 99-457, 1988.

5. See state reports on abuse and neglect prevention (Massachusetts).

6. See Standards for Strengthening and Preserving Families, Child Welfare League of America, forthcoming.

7. See the federal Family Support Act of 1988, which specifies provision of parent education for teen parents as possible part of a state's welfare-reform strategy, and Francis & Marx, 1989.